PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in May 2009

VORWAERTS TURNER HALL

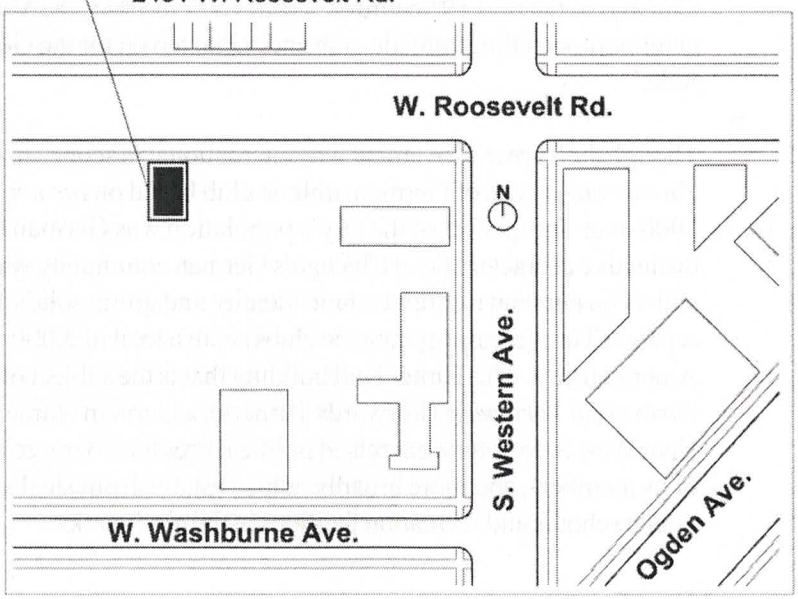
2431 W. Roosevelt Road

Date: 1896-1897
Architect: George L. Pfeiffer

With its limestone facade carved with German-language inscriptions, the *Vorwaerts Turn Halle* (Forwards Turner Hall), located at 2431 W. Roosevelt Road on the Near West Side, is a rare-surviving building associated with the international Turner movement. This cultural, social and political movement was established in Germany in the early 19th century and was imported to Chicago in the mid 19th century. From 1897 to 1945, the Vorwaerts Turner Hall served as a neighborhood ethnic athletic club and social haven for the German community on the Near West Side.

Though the Turner Movement was international in scope, at the local level it consisted of *Turnverein*, a type of German athletic club based on *turnen,* or the practice of gymnastics. In 1900 over one quarter of the city's population was German by birth or descent, and a distinctive characteristic of Chicago's German community was its very active participation in clubs *(Verein)* that nurtured ethnic identity and group solidarity. By 1890, Chicago had 34 separate Turnvereins (gymnastic clubs) with a total of 5,000 members, more than any other American city. The Turner Hall building that is the subject of this report was built by the *Turnverein Vorwaerts* (Forwards Turners), a German ethnic club drawing members from the Near West Side, which exercised political pressure to improve the social and economic position of its members, and more broadly helped establish physical education programs in Chicago's public schools and recreation facilities in the city's parks.

Vorwaerts Turner Hall
2431 W. Roosevelt Rd.



The Vorwaerts Turner Hall, located at 2431 W. Roosevelt Road on the Near West Side, is a rare surviving example of a neighborhood ethnic athletic club. It was built by the *Turnverein Vorwaerts* (Forwards Turners), a German club which promoted not only athletics, but also worked to advance the social and political status of the German working class community of the Near West Side.

The International Turner Movement

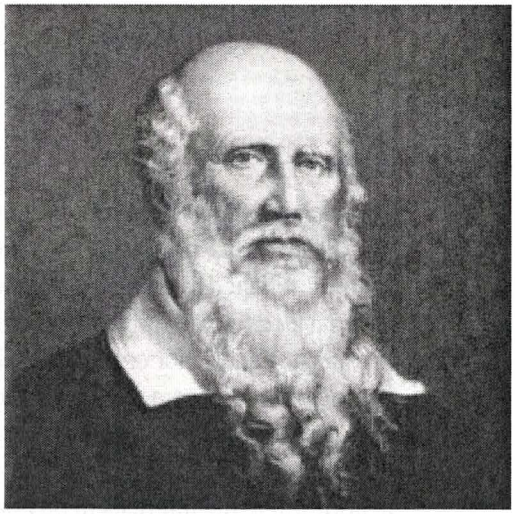
The facade of the Vorwaerts Turner Hall prominently features the bust of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), a Prussian gymnastics teacher and the founder of the Turner movement. In 1811, Jahn established an open air gymnasium *(Turnplatz)* in Berlin to provide a place for organized gymnastic exercise for young men. Turnverein, or gymnastic clubs, soon spread throughout Prussia and the other confederated German states. Jahn is credited with the design of gymnastic equipment still in use today, including the balance beam, horizontal bar, the parallel bars, and the vaulting horse.

In addition to his interests in physical education, Jahn was a German nationalist and a popular author who chafed under France's military victories over the German states during the Napoleonic Wars from 1806 to 1814. He believed that a program of physical training and discipline would prepare young German men to eventually take up arms against France and create a united German republic. This moment came in 1813, and Jahn played an important role in the Lützow Free Corps, a volunteer force made up of students and academics who fought in the Prussian army in its victory against Napoleon I of France.

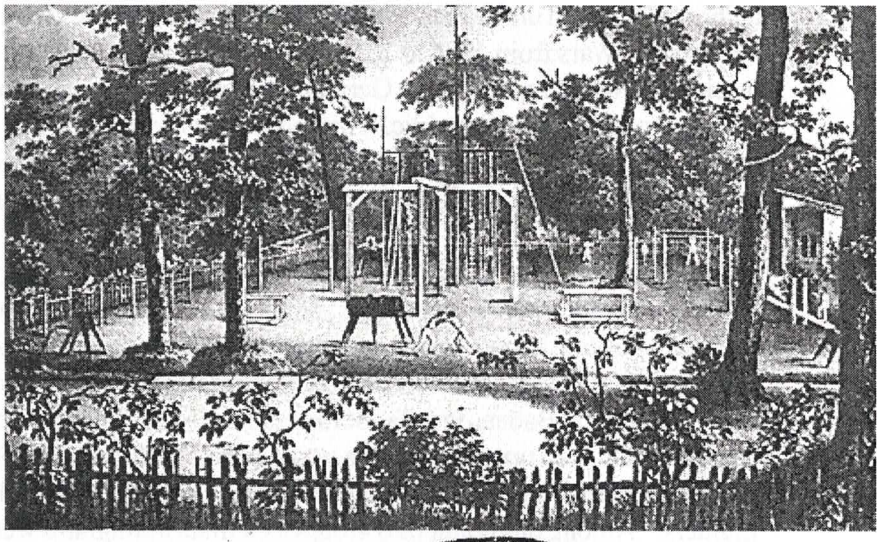
Jahn continued to lead and expand the Turner movement after Napoleon's defeat, and in the 1840s the Turner's political activities refocused on unification of the loose confederation of German-speaking countries into a modern nation-state with a liberal constitution. This endeavor culminated in the German Revolutions of 1848 where Turners figured prominently in mass uprisings in Baden, Vienna, Berlin, and Dresden. The revolutions of 1848 failed in Germany, and the Turner movement was suppressed during the government's backlash. Many disappointed revolutionaries immigrated to the United States and became known as the "Forty-Eighters." Among this politicized group of German immigrants were many Turners who would remain committed to the gymnastic discipline and political agenda of the Turner movement.

"Forty-Eighters" soon established Turnvereins in American cities with large German populations in the Northeast and Midwest, first in Cincinnati in 1848. In 1852 the Chicago Turngemeinde was the first of several Turnvereins that would be established in Chicago. Though they maintained a strong German ethnic identity, the German-American Turners were remarkable for their engagement in political issues facing the United States. Following their liberal traditions, Turners supported abolition of slavery. During the Civil War, 105 members of the Chicago Turngemeinde fought for the Union Army as the Turner Union Cadets Company as part of the 24th Illinois Regiment. Several of the charter members of the Turnverein Vorwaerts were also veterans of the Civil War.

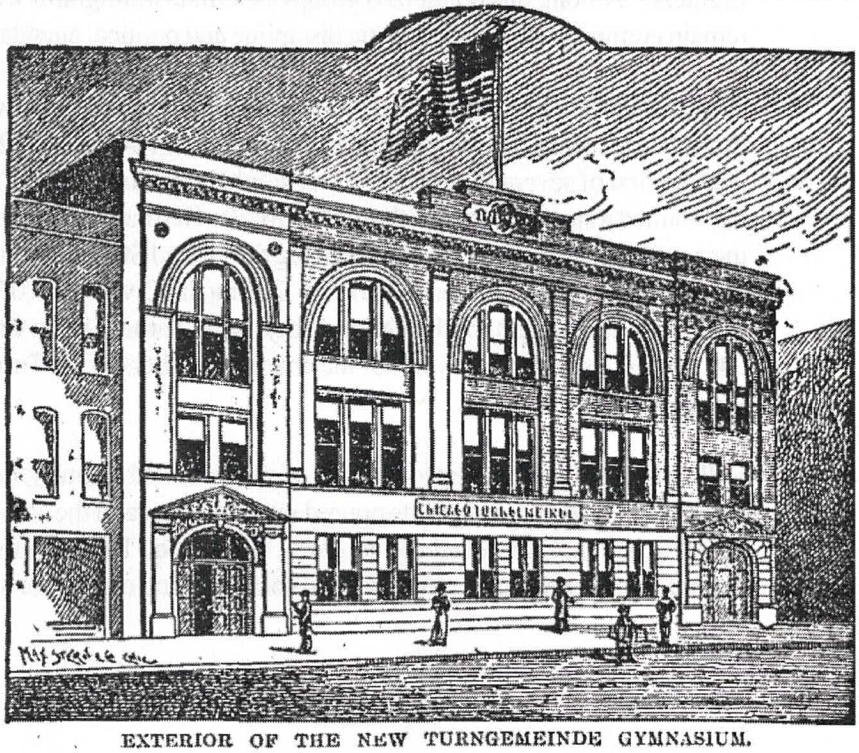
Following the Civil War up to the turn-of-the-twentieth century, the Turner movement continued to grow as German immigrants poured into America, and the Turners remained active in pressing political and social issues during this period. This manifested itself in Chicago in the Turner's support of trade unionism and socialism and opposition to temperance legislation.



Gymnastics teacher and political activist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852, at right) began the Turner Movement in 1811 with an open air gymnasium in Berlin (below). Jahn is credited with the design of gymnastic equipment still in use today, including the balance beam, horizontal bar, parallel bars, and vaulting horse.



The Turner Hall of the *Chicago Turngemeinde* (right, demolished) at Wells and Eugenie Streets was completed in 1892. There were once 34 Turnverein clubs in Chicago, and their purpose-built Turner Halls were prominent buildings in the City's German neighborhoods. Today only three German Turner Halls are known to survive in the City.



EXTERIOR OF THE NEW TURNGEMEINDE GYMNASIUM.

While many ethnic clubs met in rented theaters or public halls, the Turnverein's emphasis on organized physical activity required a purpose-built structure with a gymnasium, locker rooms, and specialized equipment. Though Swiss and Slavic immigrants also formed gymnastic associations, purpose-built Turner Halls were predominantly a German phenomenon and a point of pride for the German community, boastfully expressed by the *Workingman's Advocate* newspaper:

> *These buildings have been erected mainly though the energy of the workingmen of one nationality; yet to the eternal disgrace of our American, Irish, English, and Scotch mechanics, all of them combined are unable to point to a single structure which stands as a monument to their independence which they can claim as their own property— or which they can use as a resort, without the payment of rent to any landlord. On the contrary, the Germans have their lyceums, their reading rooms, their lecture and music Halls, their gymnasiums, where they can meet in social concourse, discuss the political situation, enjoy an intellectual treat and improve their physical conditions.*

The *Turnverein Vorwaerts*: An Ethnic Gymnastic Club

In addition to its relationship to the overall international Turner movement, the Vorwaerts Turner Hall building is also significant for its association with the local ethnic gymnastic club that built it: the Turnverein Vorwaerts. This was one of the 34 local Turnverein clubs that once flourished in Chicago.

The First Vorwaerts Turner Hall (1868-1896)

The Turnverein Vorwaerts club originated in 1867 when 44 members seceded from the older Chicago Turngemeinde and began meeting at a small rented hall. The first programs offered included gymnastic training, as well as singing, band and drama programs. Within a year the organization purchased land near the intersection of Halsted Street and Twelfth Street (now Roosevelt Road) on the Near West Side, a neighborhood that had been settled by German immigrants as early as 1850. The First Vorwaerts Turner Hall (also known as the Twelfth Street Turner Hall) was a three-story frame structure completed in 1868. Though this building no longer exists, it deserves brief mention as the setting for significant events in the history of the Turnverein Vorwaerts.

Unemployment, strikes and labor unrest created fertile ground for socialism and increasingly radical left politics to take root in Chicago's German working class from the 1870s through 1890s. Like other turner halls in Chicago, the large gymnasium at the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall served double duty as an auditorium, and was often used for mass meetings and political speeches which argued for improved working conditions for lower and middle class. During an economic depression in 1873, the Turnverein Vorwaerts hosted a mass march from their first

DRIVING THE RIOTERS FROM TURNER HALL.

The illustration at right shows the gym/auditorium of the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall during the "Turner Hall Raid" of 1877. During the late 19th century, both the first and second Turnverein Vorwaerts' buildings were the setting for left-leaning political speeches and mass meetings.

Civil rights activist, author, and feminist, Lucy Parsons (above) spoke at the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall at the 1895 anniversary of the Haymarket Tragedy. Parsons was the widow of Albert Parsons, one of the men executed after the Haymarket affair.

The 1898 anniversary of the Haymarket Tragedy was marked by a speech by the Emma Goldman (above) at the Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall. Goldman was an internationally-prominent anarchist known for her political activism, writing and speeches.

hall to a City Council meeting to present resolutions demanding that the city create jobs and increase aid for the unemployed. Some of these events were sponsored directly by the Turner organization, while others were arranged by outside groups who rented the auditorium.

Most significantly, the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall became a flashpoint in the national Railroad Strike of 1877 in an incident that received national press coverage known as the "Turner Hall Raid." In response to pay cuts, railroad workers in West Virginia went on strike in July of 1877. As the national railroad hub, the strikes soon spread to Chicago resulting in a series of violent clashes between the police and strikers in the summer of 1877. On the morning of July 26, approximately 200 furniture makers known as the Harmonia Association of Joiners gathered at the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall to discuss the strike. The meeting was raided by police, and one civilian was killed and several were injured. The incident escalated tensions which boiled over later that day at the "Battle of the Viaduct" four blocks away where 14 rioters were killed in a clash with the police and the National Guard. Press coverage of the events reflected the public's growing uneasiness towards the left-leaning working-class immigrants. In *Harper's* magazine, the crowd within the Hall was described as "a howling, yelping mob of irresponsible idiots" and that the "communistic element was largely represented."

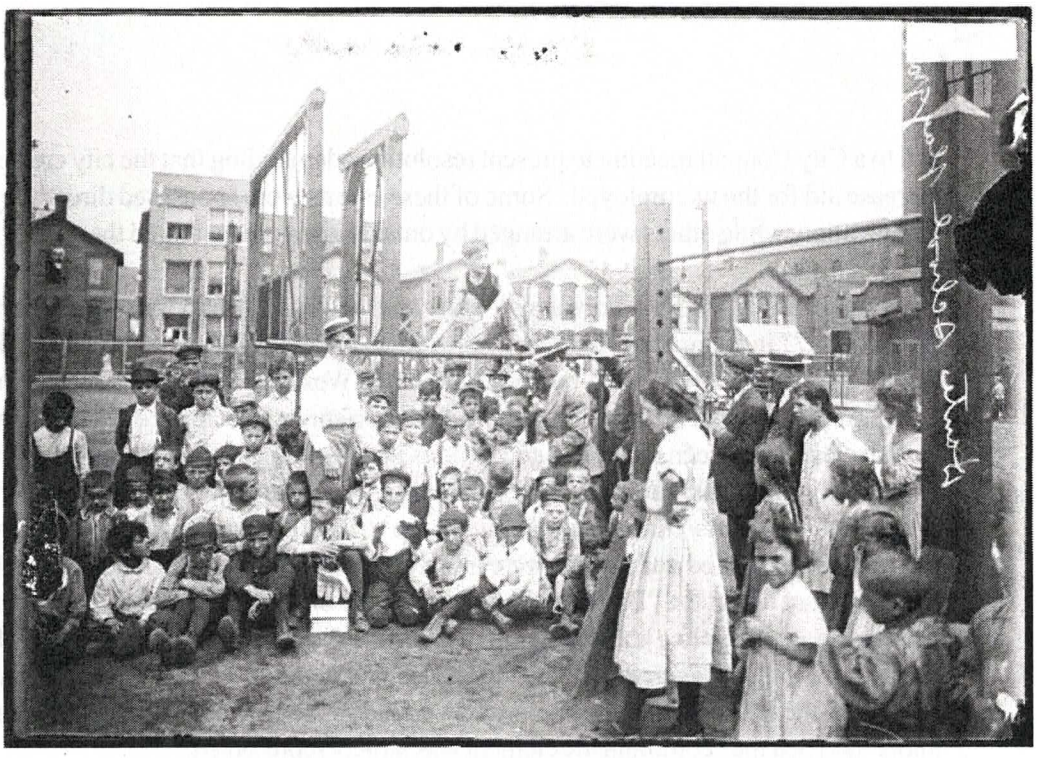
The events of 1877 led to further retrenchment on both sides of the labor issue, and the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall continued to be a place for the airing political ideas of the radical left throughout the 1880s and -90s. In the years after the Haymarket Tragedy in 1886, the First Vorwaerts Turner Hall staged mass meetings and speeches commemorating the event. These anniversary ceremonies were often covered by the Chicago *Tribune*, with sensational reports of speeches praising the five anarchists executed after Haymarket. At the anniversary in 1891, the Hall was again raided by police, this time without violence. The 1895 anniversary hosted Lucy Gonzalez Parsons, the widow of the executed Albert Parsons, who was establishing herself as a nationally-prominent civil rights and labor activist, author, and feminist.

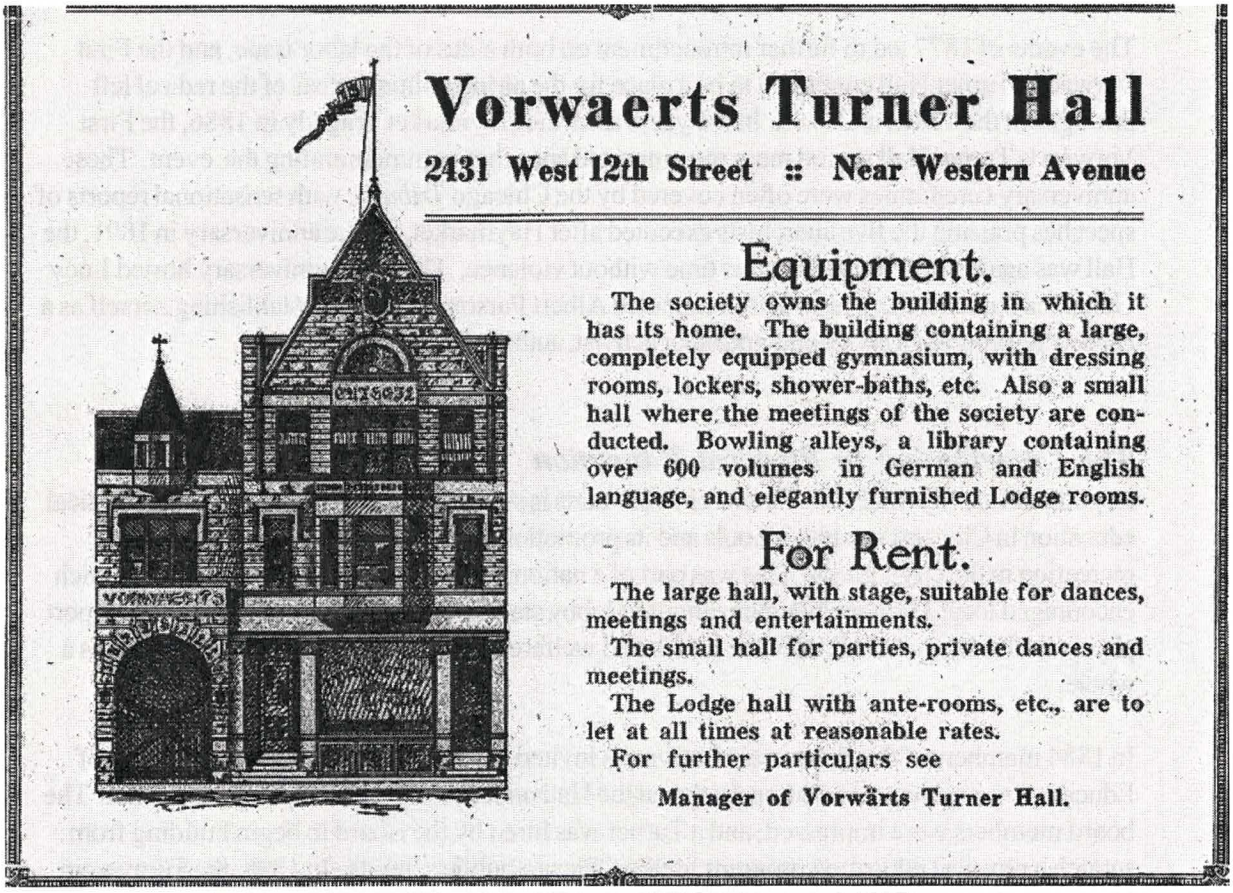
The Contribution to Physical Education

Its political activity aside, the Turnverein Vorwaerts is significant for its advancement of physical education in Chicago's public schools and its promotion of new facilities for active physical recreation in the city's parks. This was part of a national effort by the American Turners which encouraged local Turnverein organizations to lobby state and municipal governments to support physical activity as beneficial to the health and welfare of not just Turners, but the country as a whole.

In 1884 members of the Turnverein Vorwaerts invited a Committee of the Chicago Board of Education to a gymnastics demonstration at the Hall under the direction of William Zoeller. The board members were impressed, and a Turner was hired by the Board to begin building from scratch a physical education program for the Chicago public schools. In 1898, the Turnverein Vorwaerts donated gymnastic equipment to six public schools that were developing playgrounds.

Children gathered around gymnastic equipment (right) at the Dante School playground on the Near West Side in 1910. The Turnverein Vorwaerts organization donated gymnastic equipment like this to Chicago Public Schools that were developing playgrounds during this time.




Vorwaerts Turner Hall
2431 West 12th Street :: Near Western Avenue
Equipment.
The society owns the building in which it has its home. The building containing a large, completely equipped gymnasium, with dressing rooms, lockers, shower-baths, etc. Also a small hall where the meetings of the society are conducted. Bowling alleys, a library containing over 600 volumes in German and English language, and elegantly furnished Lodge rooms.
For Rent.
The large hall, with stage, suitable for dances, meetings and entertainments.
The small hall for parties, private dances and meetings.
The Lodge hall with ante-rooms, etc., are to let at all times at reasonable rates.
For further particulars see
Manager of Vorwärts Turner Hall.

An advertisement for the Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall from around 1897.

The Turnverein Vorwaerts also played a part in the campaign by progressive reformers in the late 19th century to transform the city's municipal parks to accommodate more active forms of physical recreation, such as swimming, gymnastics, ball playing, and supervised play. Up to this time Chicago's public parks were primarily designed for passive recreation such as strolling, horseback riding, and carriage rides.

In 1895, members of the Turnverein Vorwaerts prepared plans and specifications for a playground and natatorium at the nearby Douglas Park, and submitted a petition with 56,000 signatures in support of the proposal to the West Park Commission. The Commission adopted a resolution in favor of the proposal, and in October 1896 the improvements at Douglas Park were completed. In the same year, Turnverein Vorwaerts member George Sonnenleiter was appointed as playground superintendent by the West Park Commission. He went on to work for the city of Chicago as Municipal Playground Director from 1902 to 1932. Eight other members of the Turnverein Vorwaerts served as directors of individual Chicago parks.

In July 1896, members of the Turnverein Vorwaerts sent letters to all of the American Turner organizations proposing the establishment of a national athletic park, owned and managed by Congress, to hold national and international athletic contests similar to the Olympic Games. The proposal was certainly inspired by the recent success of the first modern Olympic Games which were convened in Athens. The letter noted that "a few months ago the American athletes returned from the classic fields of Greece crowned with laurels. Now is the time to utilize the enthusiasm that the victors have created." Though the proposal never materialized, it reveals the Turnverein Vorwaerts' willingness to lobby government and to expand the benefits of physical education outside of the German ethnic community.

The Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall (1896-1945)

Eighteen ninety-six was a watershed year for the Turnverein Vorwaerts. In addition to its ambitions for a national athletic park, the club began construction on a new building. This Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall is the subject of this report. The $37,500 cost for the building and land was financed through rentals of the facility and the increased membership the new building would attract. Architectural services were donated by architect George L. Pfeiffer who was also the president of the Turnverein Vorwaerts at the time of the construction. A construction notice published in the *Inland Architect & News Record* described the plans for the building as having a stone front, hardwood and marble interior finishes, and modern plumbing and gas fixtures.

Following its completion in January 1897, the Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall served for nearly a half century as a forum for organized sports and social programs for the German ethnic community on the Near West Side. Training in boxing, wrestling, fencing, track, and later volleyball and indoor baseball were offered at the building. Like other Turnverein clubs in Chicago, the Turnverein Vorwaerts sponsored teams which competed in tournaments ranging in scope from local meets to the international *Turnfests*. The Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall frequently hosted local and regional competitions with other Turnvereins. In 1904, the

The Turnverein Vorwaerts fencing team in 1907. Like other Turnverein clubs in Chicago, the Turnverein Vorwaerts sponsored teams which competed in local up to international competitions, and the Hall frequently hosted these local and regional competitions.

An undated but early photograph of the building. This part of Roosevelt Road was once a densely-built commercial strip serving the German ethnic community on the Near West Side.

Vorwaerts men's gymnastics team competed in the Games in St. Louis, and a club member also competed in the Munich Olympic Games in 1923.

While the Turnverein Vorwaerts organization had initially been a hot bed of political activity in the 1870s and -80s, the club gradually became less politically active in the years after the new building was completed in 1897. Nevertheless, the club's activities continued to reflect the social concerns of the German working class. The 1898 anniversary of the Haymarket Tragedy was marked by a speech by Emma Goldman, an internationally-important figure in the development of anarchist political philosophy. In 1899 former governor and then-mayoral candidate John P. Altgeld spoke to a packed auditorium at the Second Vorwaerts Turner Hall against a proposal to grant long-term leases to private rail monopolies to provide public transportation services in the city. Opposition to prohibition was another issue frequently taken up by speakers at the Second Turner Hall, including one speaker who wondered in 1910 "can you imagine a German choral society, after singing songs of the fatherland, gathering about a lifeless collation of ice cream and lemonade?" Taxes, the Spanish-American War, and opposition to the introduction of the bible into public schools were also topics of speeches at the second Vorwaerts Turner Hall in this period.

Building Design and Construction

The Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a three-story masonry building located on Roosevelt Road just west of Western Avenue in the Douglas Park neighborhood on the Near West Side. The structure consists of a stone foundation with load-bearing masonry outer walls. The floor and roof structure are frame construction. The street (north) elevation is clad in limestone ashlars and is built to the sidewalk line of what was once a densely-built commercial street. The east and west sides of the building are common brick and were originally obscured by neighboring buildings which were later demolished. In its original configuration, a 2-story gymnasium was located behind the building (demolished in 2007).

The design of the front facade is divided into halves. The left, or eastern, half is marked by a wide, arched porte cochere which originally led into the rear gymnasium. The archway is constructed of heavy limestone voussoirs supported by paired limestone columns with foliate capitals atop battered plinths. A large window opening is located above this arch on the second story. The third story has a steep mansard roof punctuated by a dramatic oriel dormer window with a corbelled limestone base and topped with a conical turret. The turret and the mansard roof are clad in alternating bands of diamond and square red-slate shingles.

On the right, or western half, of the facade is a large storefront window at street level flanked by a pair of entrances framed with heavy pilasters. The middle entrance opened into the bar behind the storefront window and adjoining club rooms. The side entrance provided access to the upper floors and the apartment of the resident building manager. The second story features a projecting window bay clad in limestone. The third story contains grouped windows like the second story below it. The western half of the facade has a steep, front-facing gable roof with decorated skewback corbels and limestone finals. The center of the gable contains a half-round

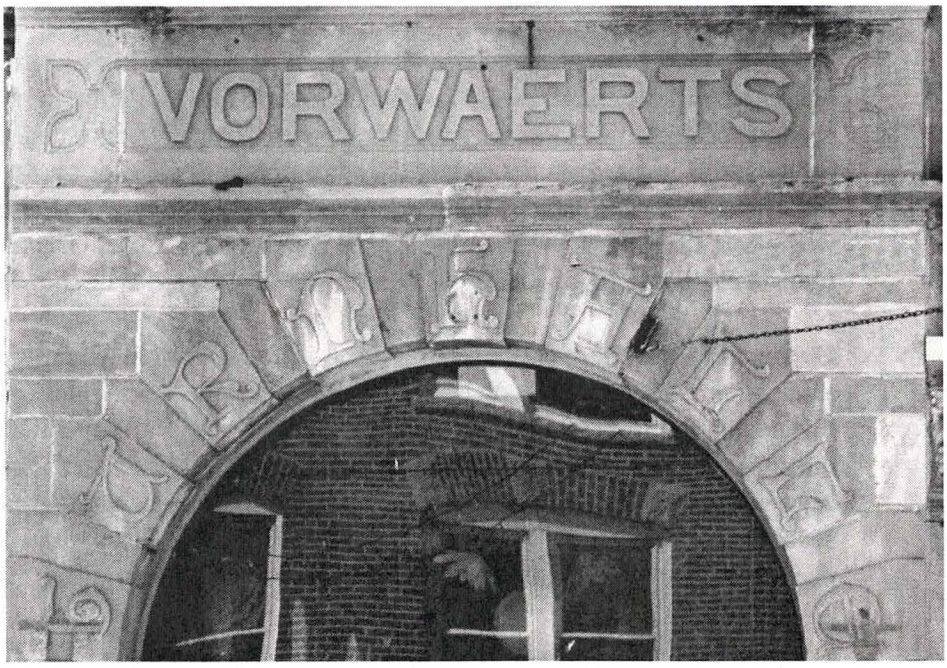
The German-language inscriptions and symbols carved into the facade of the Vorwaerts Turner Hall graphically convey the building's German ethnic identity.

The bust of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (right), the Prussian founder of the Turner Movement, occupies the highest point of the facade.

The intertwined letters FFST (in the cartouche at right) stand for the German words "*Frisch, Fromm, Stark & Treu*," and represents the basic principles of the Turner movement: "Healthy, Upright, Strong & True."

"*Gut Heil*" represents a common salutation in German that roughly translates as "Good Health."

The word "*Vorwaerts*" is carved in a panel above the porte cochere in a raised sans serif font. Below this, and set within the stones of the archway, is "*Turn Halle*" (or Turner Hall) in a Gothic font.



window. Decorative vertical piers, which give the gable vertical emphasis, terminate in bosses carved with floral ornament. A rectangular panel of carved ornament is carried across the front of the gable.

Though designed in distinct asymmetrical halves typical of the Queen Anne style, the organization of the facade is balanced and unified by horizontal elements such as the stringcourses at each floor line and the continuous strip of label molding above the second floor windows. Horizontal bands of smooth and rusticated limestone serve the same unifying purpose at the second story. The prominent third story gable is similarly treated with a smooth limestone base and rustication above.

Nineteenth-century ethnic groups rarely used native or exotic styles of architecture for their buildings, but rather embraced popular American fashions. In many cases, the ethnic association of a buildings may then largely be identified by foreign-language inscriptions or symbols. The Vorwaerts Turner Hall facade is a fine example, with its combination of dates, German-language inscriptions, a cryptic acronym, and the sculptural bust of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. The word "*Vorwaerts*" is carved in a panel above the arched porte cochere in a raised sans serif font. Below this and set within the stones of the archway is "*Turn Halle*" (or Turner Hall) in a Gothic font. The date of the founding of the Turnverein Vorwaerts (1867) is engraved on one side of the entrance, with the date of the building's construction (1896) on the other. On the second story are the words "*Gut Heil*" a colloquial German salutation that roughly translates as "Good Health." Higher up on the facade are an acronym and a bust carved in limestone that would have been familiar to Turner members. First is the acronym of intertwined letters "F.F.S.T." which stands for the colloquial old German words "*Frisch, Fromm, Stark & Treu,*" and represents the basic principles of the Turner movement: "Healthy, Upright, Strong & True." The second element is the carved bust of Jahn, the Prussian founder of the Turner Movement. These features were carved by Carl & Gotthold Wurster, sculptors and members of the Turnverein Vorwaerts.

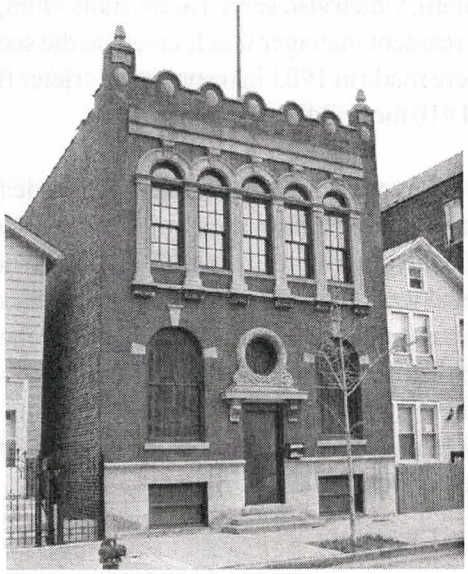
The interior of the Vorwaerts Turner Hall building contained a library, bowling alley, art and craft studios, dining and meeting rooms, and two bars, one for the public and one for the club members. The large gymnasium, which also served as an auditorium, included a stage and balcony. An apartment for a resident manager was located on the second and third floors. Alterations to the building were made in 1903 in response to stricter fire codes following the Iroquois Theater fire, and in 1910 the building was electrified.

There were once 34 separate Turnverein clubs in Chicago, yet, aside from their names, little is known about the vast majority of these clubs or their buildings. Research has uncovered what is believed to be the existence of only three other Turner Halls which survive in the City. The oldest dates from the 1880s and was built by the Aurora Turnverein at 527 N. Milwaukee Avenue. This was one of several buildings on Milwaukee Avenue that the Aurora club occupied over time. The second known Turner hall is the Lincoln Turner Hall at 1015 W. Diversey Parkway. It was completed in 1923, and like the Vorwaerts building it also has the carved "FFST" acronym and bust of Jahn. The third example, the Eiche Turner Hall from 1931, survives at 165 E. 115th Street in West Pullman.

There were once 34 German Turnverein clubs in Chicago, yet the Vorwaerts Turner Hall is one of only three German Turner Hall buildings known to survive. The Lincoln Turner Hall (top right) at 1015 W. Diversey Parkway (right) was completed in 1923.

In addition to the Germans, Slavic immigrant groups in Chicago also formed ethnic athletic clubs and built neighborhood club houses. Three of these are located in the Pilsen National Register District. The most prominent is the *Plzensky Sokol* (middle right) at 1812 S. Ashland which was built by Bohemian immigrants in 1895.

In 1901 Croations built the *Hrvatski Narodni Sokol Dom* (Croation National Sokol House, bottom right) at 1903 S. Racine. In 1906 the *Narodni Tel Klub* (National Athletic Club, bottom left) at 1821 S. Racine was built by a combination of Slavic ethnic groups.



In addition to the Germans, Slavic immigrant groups in Chicago also formed ethnic athletic clubs and built neighborhood club houses. Three such structures are identified as contributing buildings in the Pilsen National Register District. The most prominent is the *Plzensky Sokol* at 1812 S. Ashland which was built in 1895 by Bohemian immigrants (ethnic immigrants from the current Czech and Slovak Republics). In 1901 Croations built the *Hrvatski Narodni Sokol Dom* (Croation National Sokol House) at 1903 S. Racine, and in 1906 the *Narodni Tel Klub* (National Athletic Club) at 1821 S. Racine was built by a combination of Slavic ethnic groups. Athletic clubs known as falcons flourished among Chicago's Polish neighborhoods, and at least one of their buildings, or nests, survives at 1062 N. Ashland Avenue in the Polish Downtown neighborhood.

Architect George L. Pfeiffer

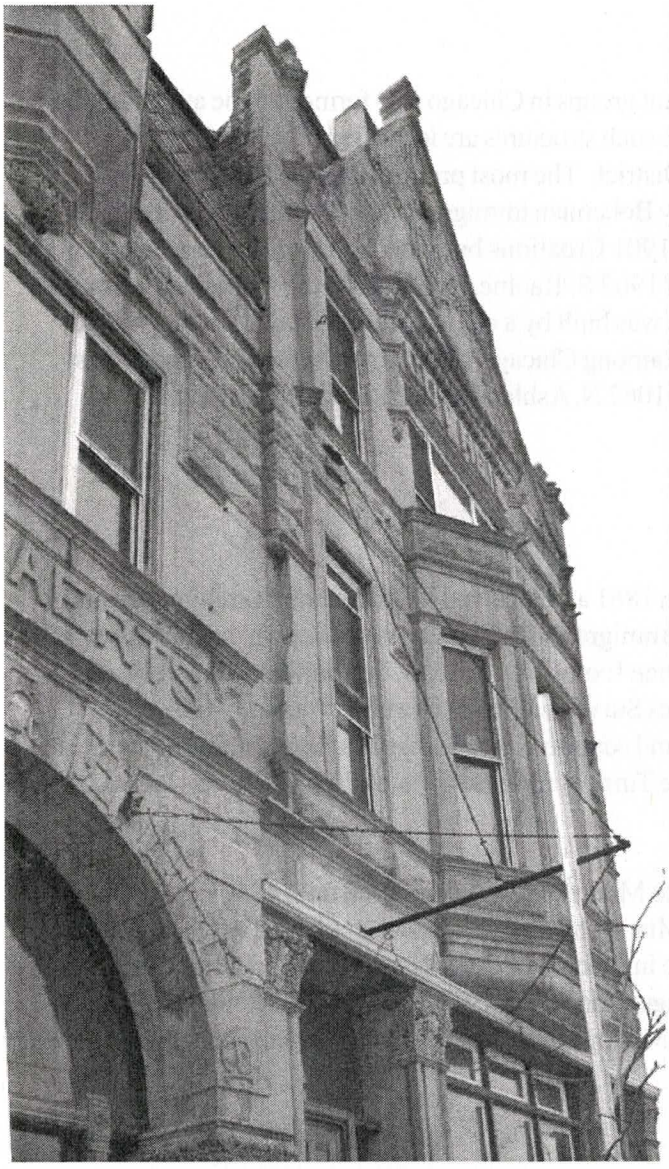
George L. Pfeiffer was born in Germany in 1861 and received his education in architecture and engineering there. Though the date of his immigration to Chicago is not known, he first appears as a staff architect for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. In addition to the Vorwaerts Turner Hall, the Chicago Historic Resources Survey identifies five other "orange"-rated buildings by Pfeiffer, including residential and commercial buildings in a range of historic styles. Pfeiffer was a member and president of the Turnverein Vorwaerts, and his office was located a block east of the Hall on Roosevelt Road.

At some point after 1912, Pfeiffer moved to Miami where he practiced until 1940 in partnership with Gerald O'Reilly. Pfeiffer's work in Miami shows that he quickly adapted to the locale and changing tastes, and his buildings show the influences of the Art Deco and Mediterranean styles of architecture. Three commercial buildings dating from 1921-1925 and one residence from 1912 designed by Pfeiffer and O'Reilly in Miami are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Queen Anne Style of Architecture

The Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a significant example of the Queen Anne style of architecture applied to a neighborhood club building. The name of the style is somewhat deceptive since the style had nothing to do with Queen Anne or the dominant architectural trends during her reign. Instead, the style was named and popularized by a group of 19th-century English architects led by Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1921). In Chicago, the Queen Anne was used for residences and commercial buildings during the 1880s and 1890s.

The asymmetrical organization of the Vorwaerts Turner Hall facade into distinct halves is a characteristic feature of the Queen Anne style of architecture, as is the picturesque roofline, the front-facing gable, the projecting window bay, and the turreted oriel window. The mansard roof contributes to the overall picturesque quality of the Queen Anne with its patterned shingles.



PFEIFFER, GEORGE L.

The Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a fine example of the Queen Anne style of architecture with its asymmetrical facade, projecting bays, and combination of rough and smooth textured stone (above). The paired columns and capitals (right) display a high degree of masonry craftsmanship in traditional limestone.

The building was designed by architect George L. Pfeiffer (top right) who was also a German immigrant and an active member of the club.

Decorative richness is another trait of the Queen Anne style, manifested at the Vorwaerts Turner Hall by the carved-limestone ornamental details, particularly by the columns and pilaster capitals at the base of the building, and the heraldry and floral ornament at the upper portion of the gable.

The Queen Anne style is also noted for its eclectic combinations of forms from separate architectural styles. Such combinations include the use of Classical columns, Romanesque arched openings, and Gothic ornamental details at the Vorwaerts Turner Hall.

Later History of the Turnverein Vorwaerts

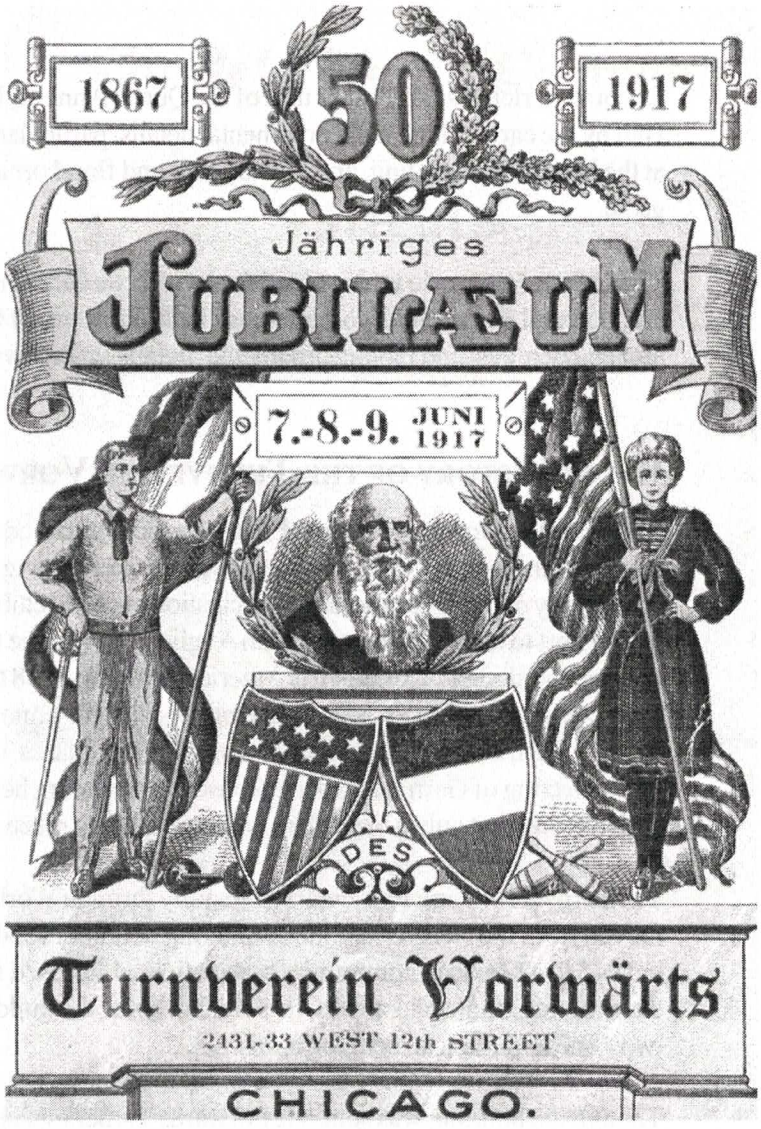
The period around the two World Wars was accompanied by increasingly anti-German sentiment in America. Assimilation was particularly strong within the German-American ethnic community during this time, and participation in ethnic clubs like Turnverein declined nationally. In an effort to adapt, the organization Anglicized its name to the "Forwards Turners" and adopted the slogan "Turnerism is Americanism." In 1938 the Illinois Association of Turners disavowed any links to fascist organizations, due to "annoyance and even attacks by misled mobs." Such a mob had gathered outside the Vorwaerts Turner Hall in 1938 on the suspicion that a meeting of German-American fascists was being held. Upon dispersing the mob, the police found that only a basketball game was taking place inside the Hall.

The Turnverein Vorwaerts declined steadily through World War II as most of its members moved from the Near West Side to outlying neighborhoods and suburbs. The building was sold in 1945 to a Mexican community association which used it as a social center. Later, reflecting the evolving ethnic makeup of the neighborhood, the building served as a house of worship for two African-American congregations.

Though the building was sold, the Forwards Turners survived as an organization, and in 1954 it merged with the Social and Swiss Turnverein organizations in Chicago, forming the American Turners of Northwest Chicago. In 1956, this organization built a new gymnasium on Belmont and Natoma Avenues. In 2005 the American Turners of Northwest Chicago moved to suburban Schiller Park where it continues to operate a gymnastics and social program open to all ethnic groups.

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.



(Right) The cover illustration for the Turnverein Vorwaerts 50th anniversary publication. (Below) A group portrait of Turnverein Vorwaerts basketball team from 1907.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Vorwaerts Turner Hall be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Vorwaerts Turner Hall is historically significant for its association with the Turner movement, a social and cultural movement which began in Germany and was brought to America by German immigrants in the 19th century. Chicago had the largest number of Turnverein organizations of any American city, and the Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a rare surviving example of the 34 Turner halls that once existed in Chicago.

- The Vorwaerts Turner Hall exemplifies a neighborhood ethnic sports club, a distinctive type of institution that served the cultural and social needs of, in this case, the many German immigrants who settled in Chicago. The structure was built by the Turnverein Vorwaerts, and served as a forum for labor struggles, mass meetings and political speeches during the turbulent political period of late 19th century Chicago.

- In the promotion of physical education in public schools and improvements in municipal park facilities, the activities of the Turnverein Vorwaerts reflect the broader goals of the Turner movement in American cities in the 19th century to improve public health and the quality of urban life. Through class demonstrations, advocacy, and donation of equipment, the Turnverein Vorwaerts helped establish physical education as a regular part of the curriculum in Chicago Public Schools. The Turnverein Vorwaerts played an important role in the transformation of the city's parks from passive to more active forms of recreation by developing plans and gathering community support for improved facilities at Douglas Park, and several members of the organization served prominent positions within for the city's park system.

- With its German-language inscriptions and symbols, the facade of the Vorwaerts Turner Hall conveys the importance of ethnic identity in Chicago's history and development, in general, and specifically the contributions of the Chicago's German ethnic community, one of the city's largest ethnic groups.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

(Above) Jacob Gebhardt tending the bar at the Turnverein Vorwaerts in 1919. (Right) Looking west down Roosevelt Road from Halsted Street in 1910: the Vorwaerts Turner Hall is one of the few historic buildings that survive from this commercial strip.

- The Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a rare-surviving example of a German Turner Hall, an unusual building type that housed neighborhood athletic clubs in Chicago's German ethnic neighborhoods in the late 19th century.

- In its overall form, the Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a fine example of the picturesque Queen Anne style of architecture with its asymmetrical facade organization, picturesque roofline, rich decorative details in carved limestone, and its mixture of Classical, Romanesque, and Gothic motifs. Other characteristic features of the style include the building's projecting oriel and bay windows, front-facing gable, patterned shingles, and alternating bands of smooth- and course-faced limestone.

- The building is distinguished by its high degree of masonry craftsmanship in traditional limestone, particularly in its elaborately-carved column and pilaster capitals, molding and stringcourses, inscriptions, and the carved bust of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn.

Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or City of Chicago.

- The Vorwaerts Turner Hall is a distinct physical presence on Roosevelt Road, a major arterial street, as one of the few-surviving historic buildings of a once-densely built-up commercial street on the Near West Side.

- With its carved German-language inscriptions and Turner symbols, the Vorwaerts Turner Hall has a distinctive visual appearance that conveys the building's historic connection to the German ethnic community which built it.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

The Vorwaerts Turner Hall retains its historic location, overall design and carved decorative details and ornamentation. Carved inscriptions and symbols convey the building's historic ethnic association. The limestone exterior displays a high degree of craftsmanship in traditional materials and detailing.

Changes to the building's exterior include the replacement of windows. This is a typical, minor and reversible change which does not detract from the building's overall architectural and aesthetic value. The exterior doors have also been replaced with salvaged historic doors of a similar vintage as the building.

In 2007, the rear portion of the building which contained the gymnasium was demolished. This rear structure was completely obscured by neighboring buildings, therefore it possessed little architectural character and was clad with a common brick exterior. The removal of the rear portion of the building has not significantly diminished the Vorwaerts Turner Hall's ability to convey its architectural and historical values.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owner and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the Vorwaerts Turner Hall the Commission staff recommends that significant historical and architectural features be identified as:

- all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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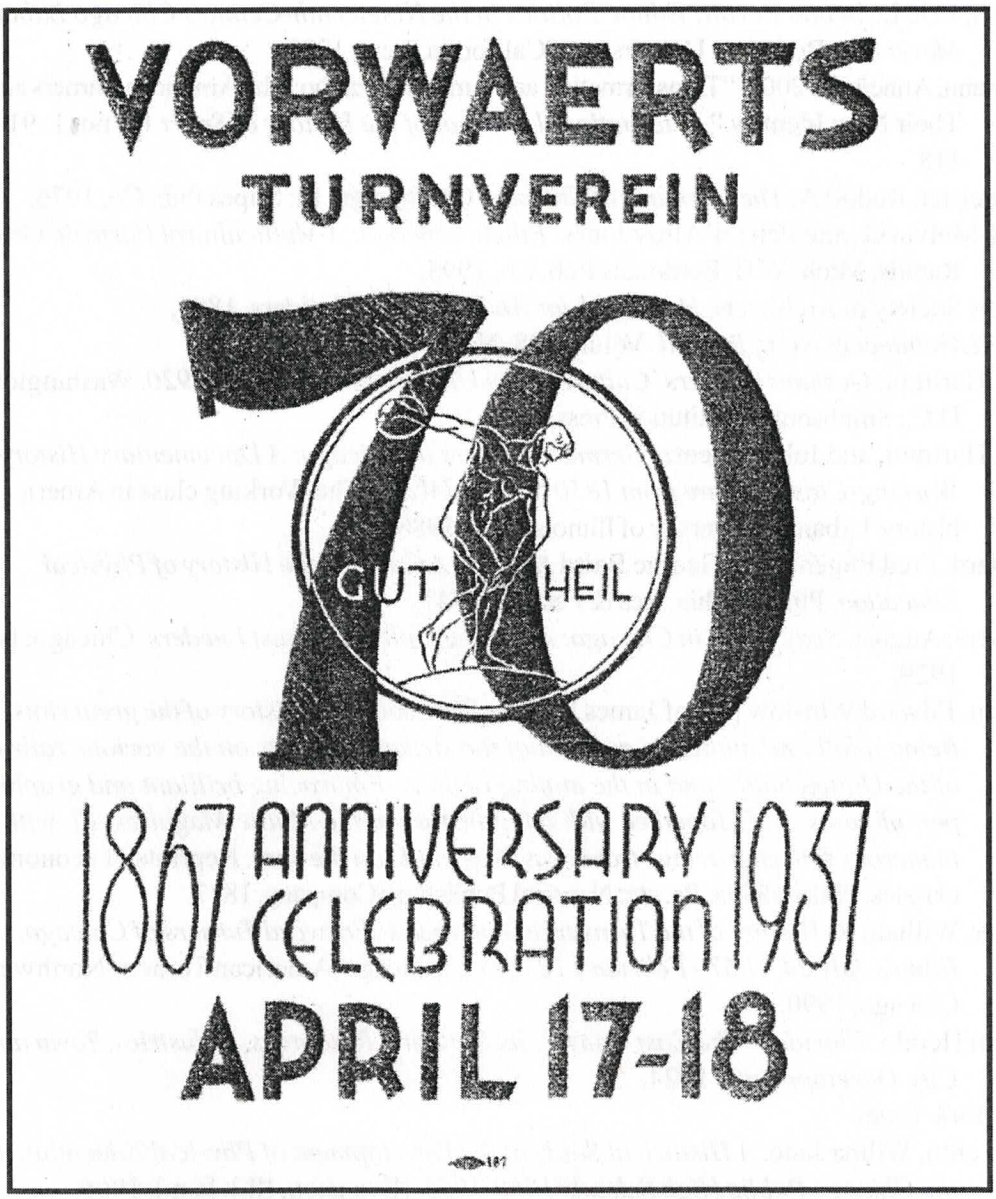

The cover illustration for the club's 70th anniversary publication.

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www.sportunterricht.de: p. 4 top and middle.
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The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose ten members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Zoning and Land Use Planning, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-2958) TTY; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, http:www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks. This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the City Council's final landmark designation ordinance should be regarded as final.